DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 128 CG 018 331

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TITLE Jealousy and Moral Maturity.
PUB DATE May 85
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association (57th, Chicago, IL, May 2-4, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; Higher Education; *Jealousy; Maturity (Individuals); *Moral Development; *Sex Differences

ABSTRACT

Jealousy may be perceived as either good or bad depending upon the moral maturity of the individual. To investigate this conclusion, a study was conducted testing two hypotheses: a positive relationship exists between conventional moral reasoning (reference to norms and laws) and the endorsement and level of jealousy; and a negative relationship exists between postconventional moral reasoning (reference to universal moral principles) and the endorsement and level of jealousy. College students (54 males, 66 females) completed the California F scale to measure conventional moral reasoning; the Atittudes Toward Women scale to assess traditional sex role endorsement; the Defining Issues Test as a measure of postconventional moral reasoning; and two jealousy measures. Analysis of results showed that the expectation of a positive relationship between conventional moral reasoning and endorsement and level of jealousy and a negative relationship between postconventional moral reasoning and jealousy was confirmed for women but not for men. The findings suggest that women are more likely than men to use their morality to resolve conflicts. (MCF)

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Jealousy and Moral Maturity

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to test two hypotheses. The first was that a positive relationship exists between conventional moral reasoning and both the endorsement of jealousy and actual level of jealousy. The second was that a negative relationship exists between postconventional moral reasoning and both the endorsement of jealousy and actual level of jealousy. Using college students as subjects, support was found for the hypotheses for women but not men. To explain the results it was speculated that a woman's morality has more effect on her feelings than a man's morality has on his feelings.

Jealousy and Moral Maturity

There is considerable disagreement concerning the question of whether jealousy is good or bad. On the one hand are those who argue that it is good because it is associated with romantic love. The Twelfth Century writer Andreas Capellanus (1957) argued this position in The Art of Courtly Love:

> But there is another reason why husband and wife cannot love each other and this is that the very substance of love, without which love cannot exist--I mean jealousy--is in such a case very much frowned upon and they should avoid it like pestilence; but lovers should always welcome it as the mother and the nurse of love. (p. 17)

More recently the same position was argued in an article entitled, "Innocent Flirtation," which appeared in Good Housekeeping in 1968. The anonymous author describes how innocent flirtation with others on the part of her husband and herself produced mutual jealousy and rekindled the fire of romantic love in their marriage.

Empirical support for this position comes from a number of studies which have found a positive relationship between jealousy and romantic love (Mathes, in press; Mathes, Roter, & Joerger, 1982; Mathes & Severa, 1981).

Others, however, argue that jealousy is bad because it is a form of neurotic dependency which limits the freedom of the partner (Comfort, 1974; Davids, 1974; Francoeuer & Francoeuer, 1974; Lawrence, 1974; Mace, 1962; O'Neil & O'Neil, 1972; Veereshwar, 1983). The O'Neills (1972) express this position well in their book Open Marriage:

> The idea of sexually exclusive monogamy and possession of another breeds deep-rooted dependencies, infantile and childish emotions, and insecurities. The more insecure you are, the more you will be jealous.

> Jealousy says Abraham Maslow, "practically always breeds further rejection and deeper insecurity." And jealousy, like a destructive cancer, breeds more jealousy. It is never, then, a function of love but of our insecurities and dependencies. It is the fear of loss of love and it destroys that very love. It is detrimental to and a denial of a loved one's personal identity. Jealousy is a serious, impediment, then, to the development of security and identity, and our closed marriage concepts of possession are directly at fault. (p. 237)

This position also has empirical support. A number of studies have found a relationship between jealousy and various forms of personal inadequacy such as neurosis, low self-esteem, dissatisfaction with life, malevolent attitudes toward the world, external locus of control, anxiety, and dogmatism (Bringle & Evenbeck, 1979; Mathes, Roter, & Joerger, 1982).

A closer examination of the issue of whether jealousy is good or bad suggests that it boils down to a conflict between mate possession and individual freedom. Behind the positive valuation of romantic love is the positive valuation of mate possession. Thus, those who believe that jealousy is good because it is associated with romantic love, ultimately believe that jealousy is good because it facilitates mate possession. Behind the negative valuation of neurotic dependency is the positive valuation of individual freedom. Thus, those who see jealousy as bad because it is associated with neurotic dependency, ultimately believe that jealousy is bad because it interferes with individual freedom. But what determines whether an individual believes in possession or individual freedom? The answer to this question appears ultimately to lie in whether the individual is doing the possessing or being possessed, that is, being deprived of individual freedom. Assume for a moment that John and Jane are romantic

partners and that they are both motivated by rational self-interest. John wishes to possess Jane entirely so that whenever he is feeling lonely he can talk to Jane and have his loneliness relieved. Whenever he is feeling sexually aroused he can call on Jane and have this problem taken care of also, and so forth. At the same time John wishes to be totally free. He does not want to be on call to satisfy Jane's needs for companionship, sexual gratification, etc. He wants to be free to go where he wants to go and do what he wants to do, whenever and with whomever he wants to do it. Likewise, Jane wishes to possess John totally so that whenever she is feeling lonely she can talk to John, whenever she is feeling sexually aroused she can call on John, and so forth. At the same time Jane wishes to be totally free. She does not want to be on call to satisfy John's needs for companionship, sexual gratification, and so forth. She wants to be free to do what she wants to do, when she wants to do it, etc. From John's point of view jealousy is good when it refers to his desire to possess Jane and bad when it refers to Jane's desire to possess him, that is, take away his freedom. Similarly, from Jane's point of view jealousy is good when it refers to her desire to possess John and bad when it refers to John's desire to possess her.

So, is jealousy good or bad? Apparently it can be either depending upon whether one is possessing or being possessed. Although detached scientists can live with this answer romantic couples cannot. To view jealousy as good when it refers to possessing and bad when it refers to being possessed means constant conflict. John's desire to totally possess Jane conflicts with her desire for total freedom and Jane's desire to totally possess John conflicts with his desire for total freedom. How do romantic couples resolve this conflict? The answer to this question lies in the morality of the couple because moralities

specify what individuals must give up in order to achieve compromises that end interpersonal conflicts (Kohlberg, 1981). Since a morality is to some extent a product of the moral maturity of its author, the romantic couple's solution to their problem to some extent depends upon their moral maturity (Kohlberg, 1981). In an attempt to once more answer the question of whether jealousy is good or bad, let us look at the effects of moral maturity upon the conflict between mate possession and individual freedom.

If the couple is working at the preconventional stages of moral development the conflict is not resolved in terms of a morality but rather in terms of might. The preconventional individual is primarily concerned with the satisfaction of his own needs. He only takes the needs of others into consideration when he is forced to by the agents of society (Stage 1), like the police, or when the needs of others are important for arranging profitable social exchanges (Stage 2). Thus, the preconventional individual in a romantic relationship will try to possess the partner while maintaining his or her own freedom. The partner who has the most power will do the most possessing and will have the most freedom. Thus, for the preconventional individual jealousy is good if the individual is powerful and does most of the possessing. However, jealousy is bad if the individual is weak and is mostly possessed.

If the couple is working at the conventional stages of moral development the conflict is resolved in terms of norms and laws. The conventional individual is not totally self-centered. The self-centeredness of the conventional individual is limited by the norms of family and friends (Stage 3) or the norms and laws of culture and nation (Stage 4). Thus, the conventional individual resolves the possession-freedom conflict in terms of norms and laws. Although the norms and laws of the United States are not as explicit concerning the

possession-freedom conflict as they once were, generally they link possession to formal commitment. During casual dating possession is taboo and individual freedom is supported. With engagement some possession is allowed and there is a corresponding loss of freedom. With marriage almost total mutual possession is prescribed and severe limits are placed on individual freedom. Thus, for the conventional individual jealousy is bad when dating is casual. Moderate amounts of jealousy are appropriate during engagement; jealousy is considered good within marriage.

If the couple is working at the postconventional stages of moral development, the conflict is resolved in terms of contract or universal moral principles. Like the conventional individual, the postconventional is not totally self-centered. However, the self-centeredness of the postconventional is not limited by blind obedience to norms and law. Instead, the self-centeredness of the postconventional individual is limited by social contracts (Stage 5) or universal moral principles such as justice and respect for the individual (Stage 6). Thus, at Stage 5 romantic partners remain totally free except if they choose to draw up a contract specifying limits (that is, areas of possession). At Stage 6 romantic partners remain totally free; possession is not possible. Cooperation is made possible, however, because both partners are working in terms of the same universal ethical ideals. Neither, for example, would treat the other unjustly or disrespectfully. At Stage 5 jealousy is good only when possession is made possible by contract. At Stage 6 jealousy is never good.

In general, it appears that jealousy is more likely to be considered good by the preconventional and conventional individual than by the postconventional individual. To partially test this conclusion a study was carried out in which two hypotheses were tested:

1. A positive relationship exists between conventional moral reasoning and both the endorsement of jealousy and actual level of jealousy.

2. A negative relationship exists between postconventional moral reasoning and both the endorsement of jealousy and actual level of jealousy.

Method

Subjects

Fifty-four men and 66 women, students in psychology classes at Western Illinois University, participated in this study. The average age of the men was 21.70 (SD = 3.79) years and that of the women was 21.36 (SD = 4.26) years. All of the subjects were dating someone at the time of the study and the average length of relationship for the men was 21.37 (SD = 24.43) months and that of the women was 27.71 (SD = 36.56) months. For men, 16 of the subjects were dating casually, 28 were dating exclusively, and 10 were engaged, living together and/or married. For women 20 of the subjects were dating casually, 31 were dating exclusively, and 15 were engaged, living together, and/or married. Subjects received points toward their final grades for participating.

Procedure

Subjects filled out measures of moral development and jealousy in large groups. To encourage honest responding subjects were asked not to put their names on the questionnaires.

To measure conventional moral reasoning two scales were used, the California F Scale (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1972). The California F Scale was used because it measures authoritarianism which is essentially Stage 4 morality as found in the United States. Central to authoritarianism is the blind acceptance of conventional morality with its prohibitions against sex and aggression. A

large number of studies have established the reliability and validity of the California F Scale (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Byrne & Kelley, 1981). The Attitudes toward Women Scale was used because it measures the extent to which traditional sex roles are endorsed. It measures the degree to which Stage 4 morality is endorsed with respect to sex roles. The following are a few of the items:

Women have an obligation to be faithful to their husbands.

The satisfaction of her husband's sexual desires is a fundemantal obligation of every wife.

The initiative in dating should come from the man.

Since jealousy is intimately related to beliefs concerning sex roles, it was felt that this scale was especially appropriate for our research purposes. A number of studies have supported the reliability and validity of the Attitudes toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1972; 1978).

Postconventional moral reasoning was measured by means of the Defining Issues Test (Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, & Anderson, 1974). This scale consists of six moral dilemmas. For each dilemma subjects are given a list of issues which involve various levels of moral reasoning and are asked to select and rank the four most important issues. The issue selected as most important is given a weight of four, the issue selected as next important is given a weight of three, etc. The Defining Issues Test is scored by tabulating the weighted sum of the number of times the subject selected postconventional issues. Support has been found for the reliability and validity of the Defining Issues Test (Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, & Anderson, 1974).

Two jealousy measures were used. One measure consisted of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale (Mathes & Severa, 1981). This scale measures individual differences

in negative affect produced by jealousy inducing situations. It consists of 28 items most of which involve a positive or negative emotional response to a situation in which the subject's relationship with his or her romantic partner is threatened by a third party. Subjects are instructed to state whether they would respond in the way specified in the item using a nine-point scale ranging from "absolutely false, disagree completely" (1) to "absolutely true, agree completely" (9). Some of the items are:

> If (partner's name) were to see an old friend of the opposite sex and respond with a great deal of happiness, I would be annoyed. (Scored in true direction.)
>
> If _____ admired someone of the opposite sex I would feel irritated. (Scored in true direction.)
>
> I don't think that it would bother me if _____ flirted with someone of the oppostie sex. (Scored in false direction.)

One study found internal consistency reliabilities of .92 for both men and women for the scale (Mathes & Severa, 1981). A number of studies have found evidence supporting its validity (Mathes, in press; Mathes, Phillips, Skowran, & Dick, 1982; Mathes, Roter, & Joerger, 1982; Mathes & Severa, 1981).

The second jealousy measure focused on subjects' ideals concerning their own levels of jealous emotion. This measure involved instructing subjects to fill out the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale a second time in terms of how they would like to ideally feel. This measure was included because it was felt that moral maturity does not affect actual jealous emotion directly. Instead, moral maturity affects actual jealous emotion indirectly by affecting the individual's ideals concerning jealous emotion. If this is the case a stronger relationship

should be found between moral maturity and ideal level of jealous emotion than between moral maturity and actual level of jealous emotion.

The scales were presented to subjects in four randomly determined orders with the exception that the actual form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale always came just before the ideal form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale. It was felt that having subjects fill out the actual form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale just before the ideal form would minimize misunderstanding concerning scale instructions.

Results

Scale Means and Standard Deviations

The means and standard deviations for men and women for the various scales are found in Table 1. Statistically significant sex differences at the .05 level were found for the California F Scale, Attitudes toward Women Scale, actual form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale, and ideal form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale. The men were more likely to embrace a conventional morality than were the women. The men reported higher actual and ideal levels of jealous emotion than the women reported. For both men and women the mean score on the actual form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale was significantly greater than the mean score on the ideal form ($p<.0001$).

Insert Table 1 about here

Correlational Analysis

The data were analyzed by intercorrelating the measures of moral development and jealousy separately for men and women. The resulting correlations are found in Table 2. As can be seen, scores on the California F Scale and Attitudes toward women Scale correlated positively and significantly for both men (.55)

and women (.31). This supports the assumption that both scales measure aspects of conventional moral reasoning. For men, scores on the Defining Issues Test correlated -.25 ($p<.05$, one-tail test) with scores on the California F Scale and -.24 ($p<.05$, one-tail test) with the Attitudes toward Women Scale. For women, the correlations were -.47 ($p<.01$) and -.07 (n.s.).

Insert Table 2 about here

For men, actual Interpersonal Jealousy Scale scores correlated .29 ($p<.05$) with ideal Interpersonal Jealousy Scale scores and for women, the correlation was .58 ($p<.01$). These data provide support for the validity of the actual and ideal forms of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale.

The first hypothesis predicted positive and significant correlations between the two measures of conventional morality, the California F Scale and the Attitudes toward Women Scale, and the two jealousy measures, the actual and ideal forms of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale. As can be seen in Table 2, for men, only one of the four predicted correlations was found--a correlation of .32 between the California F Scale and the actual form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale. For women, all four of the predicted correlations were found. Scores on the California F Scale correlated a significant .35 with scores on the actual form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale and a significant .56 with scores on the ideal form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale. Scores on the Attitudes toward Women Scale correlated a significant .28 with scores on the actual form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale and a significant .32 with scores on the ideal form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale. Thus, some support was found for the first hypothesis, especially for women.

The second hypothesis predicted negative and significant correlations between scores on the Defining Issues Test and scores on the two jealousy measures. As

can be seen in Table 2, for men, none of the correlations were significant. For women, both of the correlations were significant. Scores on the Defining Issues Test correlated a significant -.26 with scores on the actual form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale and a significant -.32 with scores on the ideal form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale. Thus, support for the second hypothesis was found for women.

For women, all of the correlations between the measures of moral maturity and the ideal form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale were greater than the correlations between the measures of moral maturity and the actual form of the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale. This provides some support for the assumption that the effects of moral maturity on actual jealous emotion is mediated by the subject's ideals concerning jealous emotion.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that, in general, college students view jealousy as bad. Subjects stated that ideally they would feel less jealous than they actually do feel. Beyond this, moral reasoning was found to have an effect on actual and ideal levels of jealous emotion for women but not men. Conventional women were more jealous than nonconventional women and postconventional women were less jealous than non-postconventional women.

Why did moral reasoning have an effect on actual and ideal levels of jealous emotion for women but not men? The answer to this question appears to be that women are more likely to apply their morality to their feelings than are men. But why should this be the case? One answer may be that a man's feelings of jealousy are more powerful than are those of a woman and thus less subject to control by moral reasoning. Support for this answer comes from the significantly greater Interpersonal Jealousy Scale scores of men than women found in this study

and at least one other study (Mathes & Severa, 1981). Yet other studies have failed to find sex differences in jealousy (White, 1981) or have found greater jealousy on the part of women (Buunk, 1981).

An alternative answer may lie in the greater skill in interpersonal relations of women than men (Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1979). Since one aspect of interpersonal skill involves conflict resolution and conflict resolution involves the application of a morality, it follows that women are more likely to use their morality to resolve conflicts than are men. Applying this general conclusion to a particular type of interpersonal conflict, jealousy, it follows that women are more likely to apply their morality to their jealous emotions than are men.

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Table 1

Scale Means and Standard

Deviations for Men and Women

	Men		Women	
Scale	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
California F Scale	108.24	22.14	99.97	21.81
Attitudes toward Women Scale	119.11	19.14	101.85	18.29
Defining Issues Test	20.72	7.87	22.94	8.03
Interpersonal Jealousy Scale (actual)	142.72	30.24	132.53	32.36
Interpersonal Jealousy Scale (ideal)	116.44	34.33	93.86	32.53

Table 2

Correlations Among Scales:

Women above Diagonal, Men Below

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
California F Scale (1)		.31*	-.47†	.35†	.56†
Attitudes toward Women Scale (2)	.55†		-.07	.28*	.32*
Defining Issues Test (3)	-.25	-.24		-.26*	-.32*
Interpersonal Jealousy (actual)(4)	.32*	.11	.04		.58†
Interpersonal Jealousy (ideal)(5)	.21	.12	-.21	.29*	

* $p<.05$

† $p<.01$